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ROYAL GALLERY OF DRESDEN.

NEW CATALOGUE, WITH A HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION.

BY JULIUS HÜBNER.

(From "L'Illustration.")

THE Royal Gallery of Dresden is one of the richest Museums of Europe; and although scarcely dating from a hundred and fifty years ago, it is also one of the most ancient. This precious collection of paintings occupied, until 1855, insufficient and badly lighted rooms, incapable of being heated in winter, so that the pictures, and the varnish with which they were coated, were exposed in the course of the year to variations of temperature, rising frequently to more than 20 degrees of heat, and falling as much below zero. King Frederick Augustus, of Saxony, adopted in 1843 final plans for a new edifice upon a vast scale. The square of the *Zwinger*, near the king's palace, was selected for its site, and this plan has had the effect of completing, by a new wing, a range of buildings already consecrated to various collections of art and natural history. The works were begun in 1847, and the removal of the paintings, to the number of 2,200, was accomplished between the 31st May, and the 25th Sept. 1855, the day of the inauguration. (A catalogue of the Dresden Gallery, of the year 1834, before us, contains only 534 numbers.) "The length of the building, with the two slightly projecting wings at both ends, is 450 feet, by a width of 104 feet." The paintings are there arranged in rooms well lighted, and of a plain style of architecture, as befits a museum where all the internal decoration should be subordinate to the paintings. A methodical classification has taken the place of the old, disorderly, and confused arrangement. All these improvements called, as a final complement, for a well-arranged catalogue. This want has been supplied. Mr. Julius Hübner has published a few months since an interesting work, from which we borrow some curious details with regard to this gallery.

All that remains of ancient inventories, of correspondence, or administrative acts, has been ransacked. Those early inventories were made with an extreme carelessness; the attribution, the descriptions of subjects, the orthography of the painters' names, were full of faults. We read there *La Res for Laïresse*, *Mezzo for Metzu*, *Balma Vicio for Palma Vecchio*; we find even the names *Angelica a Medora* given there as the name of a painter. It must be acknowledged that greater attention is paid now-a-days to these things, although many foreign catalogues still display painful negligence, to which come to be added occasionally some strange mistakes in the French translations, which are courteously, but little intelligibly, appended. One of the most amusing of this kind which may be cited, is that relating to a painting of Calvart's in the Pinacotheca of Bologna, representing Christ appearing to Magdalen as a gardener (*in sembianza d'ortolano*). The French catalogue printed at Bologna in 1852, translates this: Christ appearing to Magdalen in the garden as an ortolan (a species of the sparrow).

The following instance, in relation to a remarkable painting of the Dresden gallery, shows what uncertainty sometimes exists in the attribution of works to such or such a master, and with what care we should come to a conclusion in this respect. This painting was included in a portion of the Duke of Modena's collection, which was acquired and carried to Dresden in 1746, of which mention will be made further on. It was there designated as the portrait of Ludovico Sforza, called the Moor (*il Moro*), and stated to be a work of Leonardo da Vinci's. And yet this picture, brought from Italy, of such perfection and delicacy, was Holbein's, as Mr. Rumohr first discovered, and as was subsequently proved by an ancient engraving, which established the fact that it was a portrait of Thomas Morett, a jeweler to Henry VIII. of England. The portrait of the goldsmith, Thomas Morett, a non-historical personage, having been carried to Italy, would be readily made to enhance its sale, perhaps, *Thomas Morus* [Sir Thomas More], the celebrated chancellor, whom Henry VIII. beheaded, and who it was known had been painted by Holbein. In Italy the name of *Morus* would be naturally converted into *Moro*. The tradition once so far astray, the last change is readily explained. In Italy, indeed, what other *Moro* was known, but *Sforza*, Duke of Milan, surnamed Lewis the Moor. The perfection of its painting would not permit this portrait to be ascribed to any other than Leonardo da Vinci. Are not these successive errors and transformations, clustering around that one word, a strange concatenation, with still a trace of the truth preserved.

The original collections, which afterwards constituted the Art-cabinet (*Kunstskammer*), and was placed in the old palace by the Elector Augustus I., about 1560, are traced back to the ancient Electors of Saxony. A number of paintings, taken out of various castles and churches, were incorporated with this first collection; and, at the time of the inventory taken in 1722, the gallery contained 4,708 paintings, out of which 3,110 were costly, and 1,598 of inferior value. In 1746 a selection was made of this large number of pictures. Copies were separated from the originals, and the latter only kept in the gallery. It was at this period that the gallery of Dresden made the valuable acquisition, to which it chiefly owes its glory, namely, one hundred paintings, derived from the collection of the Duke Francis of Modena-Este, which the financial embarrassments of this prince obliged him to part with. The negotiation was carried on most secretly between Count Brühl, minister to King Augustus III., and Monsignore Bondigli, the Duke of Modena, minister of finance, under the constant apprehension of the disapproval that would be excited by a sale which was to deprive Italy of so many of her priceless masterpieces. Endless difficulties were raised by Italian cunning with the Saxon negotiators. The price had been fixed at 100,000 ducats, an enormous sum for the time. Monsignore Bondigli exacted a remuneration of 100 ducats for obtaining leave to send into some neutral territory the paintings already packed in cases,

where they should remain as security for the whole payment. This payment having been somewhat procrastinated, and lest advantage might be taken of this delay, damages to the amount of 7,000 ducats (21,252 *thalers*) [15,750 dollars] were agreed upon. All difficulties seemed to be overcome, when Bondigli now refused to deliver the frames, under pretext that these had not been included in the bargain; so the Saxon court-painter, Ventura Rossi, principally in charge of this negotiation, had to pay him down still further 1,000 Roman scudi. The five wagon loads of paintings finally left Venice and reached Dresden on the 6th July, 1746. But the Monsignore made the painter Rossi drain the bitter cup to the dregs; for, on the payment of the 100,000 ducats, "each coin, even those newly from the mint, was weighed one by one, the slightest variation scrupulously noted, and the whole amount ten times accepted and rejected—a day's work to the poor man, the horrors of which it was impossible to describe." Among these paintings from Modena were six of the finest works of Correggio, and one of these was the famous Magdalen,

Raphael's Madonna of St. Sixtus; and the Virgin, by Holbein, are, it is well-known, the great paintings of the Dresden gallery. The latter, the masterpiece both of Holbein and of the German School, was painted for the mayor of Basle, Meyer, who is represented in it, kneeling with his family at the feet of the Virgin. It was afterwards bought for 3,000 florins by a rich capitalist of Amsterdam, named Lossert, for Mary of Medicis. But the Queen of France dying about this time, the painting remained with Lossert, and after him with his family. It was given up in 1690 for a debt of 2,000 ducats to a Dutch banker, who sent it to Venice, and bequeathed it to the family Delfino. There it remained a long time unknown or unappreciated. The regent, duke of Orleans, however, made an effort to buy it; but France missed this good fortune a second time. The celebrated Algarotti, commissioned by Count de Brühl, in the name of King Augustus III., to purchase paintings in Italy, obtained the precious picture on the 4th September, 1743, for 1,000 ducats, or 22,000 livres of Venice. An autograph bill of this purchase makes the sum total 28,024 livres of Venice. This comprises 1,148 livres for a present of chocolate, plate, and a cane with an amber handle, to a Mr. Tiepolo, the broker in the business; 440 livres paid to the business-man of the Delfino-house; 22 livres to servants, etc. Notoriously it is the custom in Italy to have ten go-betweens to each bargain.

The Madonna, styled the "St. Sixtine," is one of the purest and most ideal works of Raphael; he painted this Virgin for the grand altar of the convent of St. Sixtus, at Piacenza. There, in 1753, the painter, Carlo Cesare Giovannini, succeeded in acquiring it for the Dresden Gallery, at the price of 20,000 ducats, or 40,000 Roman dollars. Some parts of the picture had been injured; and, grievous to relate, chiefly by the artists copying it; and who, to bring out the color, had frequently rubbed over the head of the Virgin with oil or with saliva. It was carefully cleaned

and restored in 1827, by Palmaroli. Our museum of Rouen is in possession of a repetition of the Sixtine Madonna, the claims of which had to be argued upon by the historian of the Dresden gallery; here was a question of rivalry to silence, although the catalogue of the Rouen museum does not directly raise it, it only states that the picture, "a repetition of that which is exhibited in the Dresden gallery, must have been executed in Raphael's study and under his eye." As it neither gives (at least the edition before us, which dates some years back) any more particular details about this painting, we take the following passage from the catalogue published by Mr. Julius Hübner: "An abbot of the abbey of St. Amand in that city had, it is said, begged Cardinal Amboise to procure her a painting of the Madonna, and he had addressed himself to Raphael, who was just at the time painting the one for Piacenza. The artist then duplicated his work; but substituted the person of St. Amand for that of St. Sixtus, placing also the episcopal mitre beside him, in place of the tiara, which the other painting shows. The picture in question must have been carried to Rouen in Raphael's lifetime, and be of exactly the same dimensions as our own. The authenticity of this painting, and its rivalry with our Madonna, has been much discussed; but it appears by the decision of the most competent judges, that it will not bear any comparison."

The purchases made in Italy for the Dresden gallery required subtle and unscrupulous negotiators. Honest Raphael Mengs, who also acted as an agent in these acquisitions, had too much uprightness to be successful, and he allowed Raphael's famous St. Cecilia (now the glory of the Pinacothek of Bologna), which was then privately offered at 15,000 ducats, to escape him. Extreme caution, too, was required in this sort of business, and the correspondence between Count Brühl and Pietro Guarienti, another of the agents employed, was therefore carried on in cipher, as arranged.

If Augustus III., a sovereign badly seated upon two thrones, and to whom both Poland and Saxony seem to have been by turns rather places of refuge than kingdoms to be governed, did not possess "that eminently great and powerful character," which Mr. Julius Hübner too generously bestows upon him, he did at least contribute to the glory of the Saxon capital by his taste for paintings. So decided was this taste, that the queen, his consort, was in the habit of buying almost every year, a certain number of paintings at the Leipsic fair to present to him on his birthday; the catalogue specifies those acquired in this manner. On one occasion the queen thought she ought to vary the present. "The court-jeweler had received from Paris a splendid Spanish bamboo, with a crutch-handle, mounted in gold and precious stones, a miracle of taste and novelty for the period. Although the price a little exceeded the sum ordinarily devoted to the purchase of the pictures, the queen, encouraged by the steward of the palace, decided this time for the precious cane, and present-

ed it with her own hand to her august husband on his birthday. The king, having long examined it in silence, ingenuously asked his wife this question, to the consternation of the princess as well as of the royal steward : ' But where is my painting ? ' "

Among the number of other important acquisitions which enriched the gallery of Dresden must be mentioned the purchase in 1748, at the price of 50,000 thalers, of 69 paintings from the Imperial gallery at Prague, comprising the Charles I. and his Queen, by Van Dyck ; and the fine Boar-hunt of Rubens. In 1743, a number of paintings were bought, at the sale in Paris, of the valuable collection of the Prince of Carignan. A considerable portion of that collection was bought also by Louis XV., and now forms part of the Louvre museum. The documents regarding this sale, preserved at Dresden, have enabled Mr. Julius Hübner to afford valuable information to M. Villot, the custodian of the Louvre museum. Finally, the last acquisition was made in 1853, of 15 paintings of the Spanish School, from the collection of Louis-Phillipe, offered for sale in London.

The collection of paintings brought together by the Electoral princes of Saxony has sustained also some grievous losses. In 1769, 132 paintings of the old German School were sold for 7,900 thalers, to Mr. De Heinecke, known by several publications on Art. A much more serious loss was that of the collection arranged at the villa of Hubertusburgh, which was destroyed in 1760. The Dresden gallery happily escaped the dangers to which it was exposed, when King Frederick II. of Prussia besieged the city, and a shell and several balls struck into this sanctuary of Art. After the formidable visits of the conquerors, it received others from petty thieves. In 1788 the custodian of the gallery observed one day that three paintings had been purloined, among them the famous Magdalen of Correggio. A reward of 1,000 ducats was promised for their return. The thief, in trying to gain the reward, discovered himself, and Correggio's masterpiece was recovered out of a wretched hole under the flooring near the chimney. The stones and jewelry upon the frame had chiefly excited his cupidity. To remove her from temptation and covetousness in future, the fair penitent has been stripped once more, and now she only shines in the splendor of her beauty bestowed upon her by the genius of the painter.

A. J. DUPAYS.

The first works of a repentant conscience are not virtue, and the first products of an awakened taste are not beauty ; but in either case the time for denunciation is at an end when these signs appear. Its work is done as soon as the sparks fly upwards, and not fire, but fuel, not abuse, but encouragement, is the special want of human nature when a new love for what is holy, or for what is beautiful, first begins to burn.—*National Magazine*.

The ideals of philosophy, like those of Art, become delusive when arbitrarily estranged from the living forms which suggested them.—*Mackay*.

Notes and Queries.

THE COURT OF DEATH.—The recent charitable disposition of this picture, in the new hall of the "Home for the Friendless," in Twenty-ninth street, reminds me, as the author of it, that the circumstances that originated it, and the period of its production, entitle it to a retrospective glance, not only as regards the painter, but as a portion of American Art History.

Without pretending to claim any undue merit for the picture itself, the anecdote of its conception, execution, and exhibition may not be uninteresting to those who may regard it merely from its novelty. It was the first large painting composed and executed in America, designed for popular exhibition, before there were any galleries suitable for such a display ; for it became necessary, in most cases, to erect temporary buildings, which, however, led to the construction of permanent sky-lighted galleries ; which now afford facilities for the largest works of Art.

Accidentally taking up Bishop Porteus' Poem on Death, which describes death as a monarch, with crown and sceptre, prime ministers, and angels of destruction—my reason again revolted against the picture he drew, which might be tolerated in the romance of poetry, but not in the personifications of painting. I reflected *how* I might represent Death, as a fact, an incident, the natural and ordained termination of life. A prostrate corpse presented itself to my imagination—and on a bit of shingle, which chanced to be in my hand, I sketched the figure, as one in the prime of life, his feet and head touching the waters of oblivion, borrowing the idea from the poet, as indicating the mysterious origin and end of life. I regarded this figure as a footstool to a *form* which I sketched as the personification of the power of death, as a *decree* of the law which regulates life—a mass of heavy drapery, statue-like, indicating limbs, but showing none ; the folds from an out-stretched arm, which seems to declare that all men must die, by old age, by accident, by vice or by crime ;—within the shadow of a cowl a stern countenance, which might speak the law of the Creator—"thus it must be." An old man approaches the central objects, bending in submission to the inevitable decree, his foot touching the waters of oblivion, the purple drapery of his mortal power fading and falling from his shoulders—his out-stretched arms over the corpse—perhaps his son, his neighbor, a fellow-man in the prime of life, showing the *fact* of death, whether the premature victim of some casualty or mental imprudence. A female, with uplifted eyes, lends her gentle support to old age—sympathy, hope, virtue, religion.

Having slightly sketched these figures, somewhat allegorical, but discarding the *obsolete* conventional personifications, which were used to personate death as a king, a tyrant, a demon, a skeleton without muscles, wielding a dart—Time, as an old man, measuring life with an hour-glass, and mowing it down as a field of grass—Justice, with a pair of grocer's scales, weighing virtue and vice by the ounce, I threw the shingle away ; but a few days after one of my daughters finding it, and observing the pencil sketch, brought it to me. I had forgotten it—but it now struck me as a thought of some merit, and, perhaps, worthy to be carried out ; I therefore transferred it to a small page of canvas—added a group of figures indicative of pleasure, vice, disease ; a fascinating female, with her intoxicating bowl, and a youth in the *green* age of life, the victim of intemperance, and behind him, Suicide